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**OPINION**

# There are limits in applying military force to diplomacy

By David D. Newsom

**T**HE current debate between the United States secretaries of state and defense over the use of power is worthy of a great democracy. The two men, with major responsibilities, are seeking to answer a fundamental question.

The debate, however, seems to center on the use of — or the threat of — military power. To suggest that diplo-

macy is only successful if it is clearly backed up by the capacity and the intention to use force is to ignore many other effective forms of power. It is to suggest that the chess champion is successful only with a loaded pistol under the table.

The debate centers today on our response to three challenges to our national interests: the confrontation and competition with the Soviet Union, the conflicts in Central America, and the terrorism in the Middle East. In none of these situations does the existence or the

threat of military force, in itself, guarantee diplomatic success.

Some suggest that the Soviets have agreed to return to negotiations on arms control because they sense the growing military strength of the United States.

Undoubtedly, the successful deployment of intermediate nuclear weapons in Europe, despite Soviet opposition, and the increased defense effort in the US are factors in the Russians' decision. But others cannot be excluded: their assessment of European opinion, economic pressures in the Soviet Union, fears of American unpredictability, the outcome of the US election, calculated self-interest, and, perhaps, even a genuine desire to reduce the threat of nuclear war.

The circumstances in Central America and the Middle East, in particular, illustrate the limits of the application of military force to diplomacy. In the former case, the US must overcome the sen-

sitivities and fears created in the area by past uses of military power. While it can be argued that the Nicaraguans are negotiating with the US out of fear of the *contras* or of another Grenada, it can also be argued that the creation and support for the *contras* and the Grenada action have awakened reactions of resentment and suspicion that make effective diplomacy more difficult. The linkage of force to diplomacy, particularly in problems in smaller

nations, always runs the risk of awakening pride and fanaticism that resist, even at a sacrifice, an outside effort to impose another's will.

The shadowy sources and support for terrorism in the Middle East seem to frustrate both force and diplomacy. Those who carry out terrorist acts appear immune to normal threats and fears.

Effective force requires, not only a precise target, but one that will respond by ceasing its offending action. The only likely subjects either for diplomatic appeals or forceful actions are governments in the region. The links of many terrorists to a government are not sufficiently substantiated to make either approach an effective option. To attack the capital or military forces of a Middle Eastern country without a clear provocation could risk the loss of wider objectives such as limiting Soviet power or seeking wider peace.

Diplomacy requires, The exercise of power in support of diplomacy is a subtle, not a blunt, instrument.

It is doubtful that any Arab government or Iran has the capacity today totally to suppress terrorist movements, even if the desire existed. The issue is further complicated by an undercurrent of sympathy in the region for the causes, if not the methods, of the terrorist. Like guerrillas, they swim in a sympathetic sea. Even under pressure, leaders and governments may fear to oppose these movements. If US diplomacy has a role, it is to change that climate so that the legitimate goals of the peoples of the area are identified with the presence of the US. It is difficult to see how diplomacy that further emphasizes our readiness to use force would accomplish that objective.

The exercise of power in support of diplomacy is a subtle, not a blunt, instrument. The threat, as perceived by a diplomatic adversary, may be the use of military force, or it may be the possibility of economic pressures, diplomatic isolation, or a fear of ideas in a controlled society. Whatever the element of pressure, it must convince leaders that the threat of terrorism is real to them, that they can control it with minimum risk, and that identification with the goals of the US is to their benefit.

For the US to conclude that its diplomacy is effective only if linked to the threat of force is to ignore the strength of its ideas and the power of those who can create by patient persuasion and the application of subtle pressures a sufficient recognition of perceived common interests to curb violence and control conflict.

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